



## RI DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH, RETARDATION & HOSPITALS

### The **ABCs** of managing stress during a flu pandemic...

Although we have a flu season every year, any flu outbreak is stressful. And this year is particularly so with the great media attention focused on the worldwide spread of H1N1 (swine flu). Our ability to cope with all of the “pandemic flu news” depends on how well protect ourselves and on how well we manage our stress and anxiety. The ABCs of managing our stress will help us to become stronger, more resilient and better able to handle other stressful times in our lives.

**ACTIVITY** is important – stay physically and mentally active whether home or away from home.

**BREATHE** deeply – it can help you to feel more relaxed and focused.

**COMFORT** – increase calming activities that provide comfort to offset your anxiety.

**DON’T** turn to drugs or alcohol – it’s not a safe way to cope.

**EXERCISE** – and eat well and rest to be your best each day.

**FIND** comfort and strength in personal/spiritual beliefs.

**GET** support when feeling overwhelmed or unable to cope.

**HELP** kids learn to keep hands away from their mouth, eyes and nose.

**IDENTIFY** ways to keep daily routines and important family rituals going.

**JOT** down doctor, medical, family and emergency contact numbers & have them on hand.

**KEEP** your sense of humor! Smile, tell a joke, watch a funny movie/TV program.

**LEARN** about the pandemic and how to protect yourself and family. Be prepared.

**MAINTAIN** normal routines whenever possible; routines are reassuring.

**NURTURE** others. Pause and enjoy special moments.

**OPEN** yourself up to new and healthier ways of living.

**PLAN** ahead for possible school closures and kids staying at home all day.

**QUIT** the guilt. Accept that you can't control everything and are doing your best.

**REMEMBER** you are only human.

**SHARE** your concerns with others who understand; seek input and suggestions.

**TAKE** doctor-prescribed medicines to stay healthy.

**UNDERSTAND** and accept feelings of fear, anxiety, anger and grief.

**VALUE** the gift of each day and accept what it brings.

**WASH** hands often, cover coughs and sneezes and stay home when you are sick.

**EXAMINE** schedules and goals and limit them if the pandemic worsens.

Say **YES** to doing random acts of kindness; caring for others reaps its own rewards.

**ZERO** in on things you can change, let go of those you can't and know the difference.

**Know when you need help – and get the help you deserve!**

Seek mental health assistance if you feel depressed, hopeless, very angry or fearful – or if you are experiencing physical problems with no medical explanation. Go to [http://www.riccmho.org/service\\_finder.htm](http://www.riccmho.org/service_finder.htm) for the mental health center nearest you.

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